Some Words to Socialist Women

By
Dora B. Montefiore

PREFACE

I'm happy to have the honor of writing a short introduction to this pamphlet because Mrs. Montefiore takes the same position I took in my last book on Socialism—a book I dedicated to "Mother."

I truly believe that the future depends on women—women who are respected, educated, and free. Real morality in England won't be possible until the law no longer allows women to be mistreated, starved, or bought and sold. England will only become a truly great nation when women are healthy, fearless, and free, when they have full control over their own lives, their own love, and their own souls.

Votes for women? Absolutely. I support votes for all women. But votes are only as useful in politics as guns are in war. If women use their votes against Socialism, they will be using their own power to fight against their own freedom. Only through Socialism can women gain the respect, happiness, and independence they deserve—only through Socialism can they take their rightful place beside men.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to encourage women to study Socialism, to understand what it truly means and where it can lead them. Once they learn that, the votes will come naturally. And I will say here, just as I have said before, that if we had a million women—women who were truly committed to this cause—then we would be certain of victory, whether they had the right to vote or not. Because character and passion matter more than votes. In this country, public opinion is what really makes a difference. And the power of informed and passionate women to shape public opinion is impossible to measure.

The common people are strong at heart, and among them, the most kind and noble are the mothers. If we can help those mothers understand what Socialism means for them and for their children, then their great love and the deep sense of idealism that has always existed in the hearts of true women will bring the best mothers of England into the Socialist movement. When that happens, victory will be within reach. And once that victory comes, no child in England will ever again be unloved, uneducated, or hungry. No woman will be a servant, a slave, or a possession among free men. The people will finally begin to truly live. And one day, a stronger, better generation will look back on our time and wonder, with sadness, why we were so cruel, so selfish, and so afraid.

I hope that women will read this powerful pamphlet, think about it carefully, and, before long, join the Socialist cause—bringing victory not just to themselves, but to the men and women who, more than anyone else in this nation, truly love, respect, and honor mothers.

ROBERT BLATCHFORD

December, 1907.

SOME WORDS TO

SOCIALIST WOMEN

The one thing that will always speak to every Socialist woman, no matter how long she has been part of the movement, no matter how much she has studied its ideas, and no matter if she works for Socialism at home among neighbors or speaks out for it in front of a world that does not care or is even hostile, is the idea of Motherhood. Some Socialist women may think that starting this pamphlet with Motherhood seems old-fashioned, especially since we hope to share it with non-Socialists to show them what we are fighting for now and in the future. But when I explain that I am not talking about Motherhood in the usual way, as something only personal, but in a Socialist way—as something that includes not just raising children, but also caring for them through education, guidance, and helping society as a whole—then those who understand Socialist ideas will see that this is a new and powerful message for all women.

Let's look at this idea more closely. Giving birth to a child is not enough to raise and prepare that child to be a good and responsible member of society. Giving birth is only the first step. After that, teaching, guiding, and shaping the child's character are just as important. In fact, many women who never have children of their own take part in these other kinds of Motherhood. Women who teach, who take care of orphaned or abandoned children, and who work in public service all play a role in raising the next generation.

Under capitalism, where only a few people own most of the wealth and power, every woman who cares about Motherhood must suffer daily when she sees so many children growing up without the love, food, clothes, and safe homes that others have. No real mother can feel at peace just because her own children are safe while so many others are not. If seeing the suffering of so many children under capitalism does not make mothers realize that something is deeply wrong with our society, then it shows how much harm has been done by traditional religion, traditional morals, and traditional ideas about society. We, as Socialist women, call on all mothers—including those who believe that Christianity can change people's hearts and make them treat each other fairly. We ask them to look at what their own religion teaches and to think about how many of the people in power should have a great weight tied around their necks and be thrown into the sea for what they allow to happen to children in the slums, alleys, and villages. Under Socialism, this terrible suffering will end. Every child, from

the moment they are born, will have the same opportunities and advantages as any other child.

Right now, Motherhood suffers because working-class children must start earning money before they are strong enough or have finished their education. This does great harm to society, as thousands of underfed and overworked children are forced to balance work and learning, even though their young bodies and minds cannot handle it. Under Socialism, only adults—those over twenty-one—would work for the community. This would allow young people to fully develop their bodies, minds, and character, making them stronger and better prepared for life.

Motherhood also suffers because, when boys and girls grow up, they face the dangers of the streets and the temptations of alcohol, which is sold for profit, not for their well-being. Wealthy families can protect their children from the worst of this, but most young people are only offered "pleasures" designed to make money for rich brewery owners and landlords. Right now, mothers cannot clean up the streets the way they clean up their own homes. But under Socialism, places of entertainment will exist for the real joy and benefit of the people, not for greedy businessmen. The loving care of mothers will extend beyond their own homes, following their sons and daughters through the most difficult years of their youth, guiding them with wisdom and kindness.

Motherhood, as things are now, is deeply hurt and made powerless when grown sons and daughters cannot find work in their own country. They must either suffer through slow hunger and hardship or be sent away by emigration agents who make money from people's desperation. Under Socialism, mothers would no longer have to live with the pain of knowing that the child they love, feed, and protect—whom they would give their life for if needed—might one day have no choice but to beg for help, break rocks in a Workhouse, or even commit a crime just to be sent to prison, the only place where they can find food and shelter.

Isn't it also an insult to Motherhood under Capitalism when mothers are told to bring children into the world only for them to grow up and be sent to fight in wars for the benefit of businessmen and rulers? Their sons are trained to kill the sons of other mothers, in battles started by kings and emperors. Socialism, at its heart, believes in international unity, and this spirit of brotherhood among nations will end the greed-driven fights over land and money. In the future, Socialism will help all people live together in peace.

And what about the elderly? Who better understands how to care for the old than a mother, who has spent her life looking after others? But under Capitalism, only a lucky few receive love and care in their later years. Most elderly people from the working class either feel like a burden to their already struggling families, or they starve in tiny, dark rooms. Others are sent off to the feared Workhouse, where they are treated as if they are no longer useful. Under Socialism, Collective Motherhood would make sure that people only work up to a certain age. After that, just like the wealthy

elderly do now, they would be cared for by the community—either with their families or living in shared homes with others their age, but always with dignity.

This is why I have chosen Motherhood as the guiding idea in explaining Socialism from a woman's point of view. The more kind, loving, and thoughtful a mother is, the more she should want to fight for Socialism, replacing the disorder of Capitalism with something better. Socialism is not just a set of strict rules, nor is it a belief to be accepted without thought. It is a way of looking at the facts of life from the perspective of the people who suffer under the current system but are growing stronger and demanding change.

To explain these facts clearly and show what Motherhood under Capitalism is forced to become, let me start by reminding you that out of the 43 million people in our country, one-third—14 million people—live in extreme poverty. In simple words, this means that one out of every three people does not have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear! What kind of Motherhood can exist under these conditions? What kind of home life is possible when a mother never knows from one weekend to the next how much money she will have to buy bread, milk, or scraps of meat? How can a home be a place of love and safety when Monday morning brings the terrifying knock of the landlord demanding rent, and the mother is forced to leave her home, no matter the weather, to stand in line at the pawnshop at dawn, trading away something precious just to get by?

How can love and warmth survive in a home like this? How can a mother receive the care and support she deserves during times of sickness and struggle when the world is so cruel to those who are poor? The way society is built now, the strong and rich thrive while the weak and poor are crushed in the daily fight for survival.

Let me share something I wrote about a powerful moment in November 1905, when women who had no jobs and no food marched together. They went to speak to Mr. Balfour, who was in charge at the time. These starving women stood in the middle of a city full of wealth, hoping for help. His answer? "You have my sympathy, but what can I do?" Now, years later, there is a different leader in charge, but the wives and children of poor, struggling workers are still hungry while others have more than they need.

Back then, I wrote about what I saw. One out of every three or four women in that march carried a small, weak baby in her arms. Sometimes, one mother would pass her child to another, just to get a small break from the weight. Both the women and the babies stayed quiet and patient, not because they wanted to, but because hunger and suffering had trained them to be. When people go without food for long enough, when they struggle in silence for years, it takes away their strength to fight back.

If you want to understand what it took for these women to gather in the street and show the world their suffering, you have to think about how long they had been going without food, how long they had kept up the appearance of having a normal home even after selling off their furniture and clothing piece by piece. You have to

imagine how hard it was for them to go to the local authorities and admit that they had nothing left, that they needed help to keep their children alive.

When a woman has lost everything, when all her strength is used up, that is when her true soul, her mother's soul, is finally revealed—if anyone cares enough to look. If you really see them, if you really understand, you will realize that behind their tired, thin, swollen faces are women who have sacrificed more than most people could ever imagine. These are women who give up their own food for their children, who push through hunger and exhaustion to keep their families together. They do things that many wealthy women could never dream of doing. This is what I call "Mutilated Motherhood." This is the suffering, the punishment, that so many women in England are forced to endure. And yet, even as they struggle, the country still expects them to raise strong, proud citizens for its empire.

The way I described the suffering mothers of the East End of London is just as true for women in other big cities. It is just as true for the wives of farmworkers, who wear themselves out trying to raise children on only fourteen or fifteen shillings a week. These women are raising a generation that does not have enough food to grow strong.

Out of the 43 million people living in Great Britain, about 5 million take half of all the money made in the country, while the other 38 million must somehow survive on the rest. This means that those 38 million are, in one way or another, forced to work for the benefit of the much smaller, richer group. If you think about it, you might ask yourself: "Why don't those 38 million people realize that together, they have power? If they all stood together, knew what they wanted, and worked for it, there's no way they could lose."

So, what is it that the people of England really want? What is it that you, the hardworking mothers of the working class, need to make sure that millions of workers get their fair share of wealth, comfort, and education? First, you need the land of England, the land that has been taken from you. Next, you need the machines, the workshops, and the factories to belong to the people, so that you can start right away growing food, making clothes, and building houses—not to make profits for the 5 million rich people who take half the country's income, but for the use of everyone.

Then, you also need to take control of the railways, the ships, and the canals, so that you can use them as freely as you use the roads today. That way, you can transport food, clothes, and building materials to the places where they are needed most. Everything that is grown and made should be for the use of all people, not just to bring in money for a few. This is the only way to truly fix unemployment, get rid of the slums, and make sure no child goes hungry.

The 5 million rich people already know this, and that's why they do everything they can to keep the 14 million workers who are struggling and underpaid from learning about it. Every winter, they put on a great show of generosity, giving what the newspapers call "magnificent donations to help the poor." But for the rest of the year, these same rich people are the ones creating the poverty they pretend to care about.

Don't be fooled, you women for whom I write. Don't believe the stories about these "wonderful" acts of charity. When one of you, with barely enough money for your own family, gives a penny to someone even poorer than yourself, or when a mother among you shares a piece of bread and butter with a hungry child next door, you are giving far more than any rich person who writes a check for £10,000 to a charity. Never forget that the person writing that check, along with 5 million others, is taking half of the country's wealth every single year!

Write these facts down in simple numbers. Talk about them with your husbands, teach them to your children, and keep thinking about them. Go to Socialist meetings, ask questions, and listen to the answers that will make you think even more. And when you have done all this, you will see that the only real solution to the struggles you face as working-class mothers is Socialism. The only people who are trying to help you in a lasting, meaningful way are the Socialist leaders. But those leaders are waiting for something—the support of the millions of workers, men and women, who are barely getting any share of the wealth that belongs to them.

Some people will try to tell you that Socialists are bad people, that they don't believe in God, and that they want to ruin family life. But Socialism, as I have already explained, is not a system or a belief. It is simply a way of understanding the facts about how working people are treated unfairly. Because of that, Socialism has nothing to do with whether or not you believe in a personal God. Just like with food, where one kind may be good for one person but not for another, different people may believe different things about God. But Socialism does not tell you what to eat or what to believe. What it does is make sure that everyone has access to the best food and the best education, so that no one suffers from bad food or from ignorance and false ideas.

Socialism teaches that ignorance is the only real sin, that the time to be happy is now, and that the place to be happy is here. It shows how happiness can be reached if society is changed for the better. Don't be afraid of the word "science." It just means the knowledge that people have gathered and organized over time. Since we all have to live in this world, it is only fair that we should have access to the best knowledge and be taught the most useful things people have learned.

We Socialists especially want you women to think for yourselves. Don't just believe something without looking into it when people say that religion has always been the best friend of women. Remember that in the Bible, Jehovah, the God of the Jews, is said to have told some men he was angry with: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and will take thy wives, before thy eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour." What kind of view did that God have of women if he used them only as a way to punish men? He didn't seem to care at all about the terrible suffering and humiliation that those women had to go through.

Use your own mind and think about this: some people say that Socialists are to blame for breaking up family life. It is true that family life is not what it used to be when I was young, and it has changed not only for working people but also for upper

and middle-class families. Many things are now made in factories, and many tasks are done by machines powered by steam or electricity, instead of by hand in the home. There are many places now where people can eat out in public, inexpensive restaurants, and these places are growing every day. All children must go to school, and soon many will even have one meal at school. Meanwhile, children from upper and middle classes go to boarding schools and have all their meals away from home. Also, girls who used to help their mothers at home for free now work in factories, shops, or restaurants and earn money. All these changes take people away from home and seem to make family bonds less strong than before. But this does not mean that love and care at home have disappeared. Those deep feelings stay inside people no matter what outside changes occur. Socialists have nothing to do with these slow, natural changes in family life. Instead, the changes come from economic causes—the same causes that make the ideas of Socialism so important.

If you have read history, you know that society was not always set up the way it is now. Even the usual ways people relate to each other as men and women were different. In the time of the Greeks and Romans, workers were slaves and belonged to their masters. Later, when slavery became unprofitable, these workers became serfs who were tied to the land and had to work it for their masters, although they were not bought and sold like slaves. Then came industrialism, which led to wage-slavery. In that system, men and women are free to work if a capitalist employer has a job, and free to starve if there is no work. But through all these changes, working women have always been in a worse position than working men because they have suffered an extra kind of slavery: the slavery of their own sex. Their bodies have never been fully their own to use as they choose.

As Socialist ideas spread, private property in everything—even wives—will disappear, and women of all classes will truly own themselves. If you think about it, you will recall the many reasons, besides love, why women often marry today. You will then see how differently a future woman—who is economically free—will think about sharing her life with a man who is also free. Many women marry now because they need a home, believing that a man will provide it and make their lives easier than working for themselves or relying on family. But under Capitalism, a man soon finds it very hard to earn enough money for himself, his wife, and his children. Then, the woman is often forced to take any low-paying, unorganized work just to keep hunger away.

Under Socialism, all women who bear children—a very important role in the community by giving it healthy future citizens—will be supported by the community, just as everyone else who works for the community will be. I write “healthy children” because in a Socialist Commonwealth, even Motherhood will be studied and treated scientifically, and both men and women will learn how to be good parents. In future relationships, the most important thing for the community will be the children that come from those unions. Since the community is responsible for supporting children, it has the right to demand that children are born healthy. For relationships that do not

result in children, the community will not interfere much, because that will be part of people's private lives. And when people are grown up, the government will have little to do with their private lives.

Remember, my women friends and comrades, that our race is growing up and becoming aware of its destiny, and an important part of that destiny is shown in our roles as mothers and fathers. Once we win Adult Suffrage (which is very near if the people show they really want it), all laws must focus less on controlling personal lives and more on managing the common affairs of the people. We, as a mature and aware people, will direct our own lives and work together to manage our own community. I have already said that economic questions—like wages, the supply of jobs, and work opportunities—always affect the morals of the day. To show this, I want you working women to notice how differently a domestic servant who has a child out of wedlock is treated today compared to twenty or thirty years ago. In the past, an unmarried domestic servant who became a mother was said to "lose her character," making it nearly impossible for her to find new work. Her mistress and society would often force her into a workhouse, where she would have to work without pay for years. Today, good servants, especially good cooks, are much rarer and more valuable. So if a modern mistress sees that an excellent servant might become a mother, she usually sends her away until the child is born, helps her find proper care for the child, and often takes the servant back. As you can see, economic conditions have changed how middle-class people judge actions that go against old-fashioned morals.

You may now start to see that it is these new economic changes that are slowly changing our ideas, our laws, and our everyday lives. These changes come from outside of us, and all we can do is try to understand them and help others understand what is causing them. Some women today are getting it wrong; they feel the heavy weight of the old economic ways and, forgetting that this weight falls on poor men as much as on poor women, they try to start a fight between the sexes instead of fighting for fairness between all working people. This wrong view of things is coming back to hurt them. We can see it because wherever these leaders who blame men hold meetings, no one listens. They make the mistake of stirring up an emotional form of feminism instead of offering a clear plan to help everyone. The working-class woman has been the first to see through this shallow talk, and every day more working-class women join the fight for equal voting rights for all people.

To show you a clear example of how working-class motherhood is treated now (even though the rich newspapers like to write about "sacred motherhood" and "the beauty of home"), let me tell you about a "home" in the East End of London where a working woman friend of mine lives. Then you can decide for yourself whether it is the ideas of Socialism or the forces of Capitalism that are hurting motherhood and home life. My friend is raising eight lovely children in a shabby brick building (called a "house") on a rough street in the crowded East End of London—a place where no rich woman who owns pet dogs would ever let those pets live even one day. For this old,

worn-out shelter that they have to call “home,” the parents pay one third of their weekly earnings, and they even have to take in a lodger to help pay the rent. As soon as the children are old enough by law to work, they must sell newspapers, work in laundries until nine at night, or do other low-paying, disliked jobs in busy London. The mother has done everything she can since the children were born, and even though they live in terrible conditions, the children are lovely and beautiful. But what help does this woman get in her daily struggle, in her endless round of hard, boring housework in a “home” that no one could ever make clean or cozy? Does the community care that she is raising eight healthy, strong future citizens? No; under the present system, the community never helps her, never gives her praise or encouragement, and never provides a fair share of the basic things needed for life. If she were a bad mother—if she let her children die by feeding them from dirty bottles instead of breastfeeding, or if she spent her husband’s small wage at the pub instead of stretching it to feed all ten hungry mouths—the community would punish her. But if she is a good mother, she still gets nothing but hardship.

Now, imagine what life would be like under Socialism. My friend’s eight children would have the same good conditions and advantages as all the other children in the country. The clothes made would be for everyone’s benefit; all the nice and useful things now shown in shop windows for the joy of a few rich mothers and babies would come from community stores for the benefit of all mothers and babies. Schools would be for all children, and no child would be forced to leave school to work before they were strong and healthy enough. All the old, horrible slums, alleys, and dark, stinky courts would vanish, and my friend and her children would live in a real house where the little ones could learn from their earliest days what the comfort and beauty of home life mean. The current system of public restaurants would be organized and improved so that those who eat out know that the food served by the community is clean and healthy, thanks to the careful, scientific teaching of Social Motherhood. The walls of the community restaurants would be decorated with the best art that Socialism can support, and pleasant, soft music would play during meals, just as it does now in the fancy restaurants of the West End where the rich gather.

Can you imagine how different the life of the East End mother I have described would be? Don’t you believe that this is an ideal worth working and even suffering for? And don’t all you working women, who believe—as I do—that your children should have the same chances as other children, want to work and fight for this ideal? Some of our first practical goals must be to win voting rights for all women and all men and to make sure that no child goes hungry at school. When you working-class mothers take to the streets and demand these great reforms, showing the Government that you mean to have them, it will not be long before you get them.

Do not think, my dear women friends, that these are just silly dreams of the future I am sharing with you. Remember that most smart men and women today are

writing and speaking for Socialism in every country, and each country is helping the others in the struggle to “give the world to the workers.”

In closing, I want to share with you the words of a thinker who has helped me a great deal with his ideas over the past twenty years. I feel happy knowing he is one of the professors at London University, where he influences the minds of young men and women every day—young people who may one day see our Socialist ideals come true.

He says:

> *"To those who think these ideas are just idle dreams and not possible in the future, I can only say: Look carefully at the strong forces at work in our time. Notice the power of the men and women who are unhappy with the way things are, and see how passionate the teachers of our new way of life—both in our social life and our ideas about relationships—are. Then you will not think of them as mere dreamers.*
>
> *For those who want to know what they should do now, I say: The first steps toward our ideal are to spread Socialism as a way of life and to completely free our sisters.*
>
> *For those who, like an old poet, stop and feel weak, seeing only small-mindedness and greed in our great time, we must say a sad but firm goodbye: 'Father, you do not understand our needs. Your work is finished; stay and rest while we move on. Goodbye.'*
>
> *We are full of new feelings, new passions, and new ideas. Our time is not about pettiness and greed; it is filled with clearer and nobler ideas than before—ideas that the men will create and the women will bring to life.*
>
> *Yes, there are dangers and many difficulties: misery, pain, and injustice. But we today look beyond these problems; they do not make us lose hope, but rather push us to take action.*
>
> *People in the past valued Christianity, and we value free thinking. They valued faith, and we value knowledge. They eagerly sought wealth, but we value the duty and right to work. They spoke about the sacredness of marriage, but we see it as love being treated like something to buy and sell, and we fight for freedom in relationships.*
>
> *Your symbols belong to the past—symbols that have given much to civilization, great landmarks in history that once pointed the way forward and even hinted at our future ideal. But as symbols for what we do today, they are empty. They now show that we are still trapped in old ways of thinking, working, and in our relationships.*
>
> *We have other ideals that truly belong to the coming ages—freedom of thought, freedom of work, and freedom in relationships. These come from a deeper understanding of human nature and its history than what you, our forefathers, had.*

Call these new ideals impious, irrational, or unclean if you want; it is only because you have not understood our time or us. We must sadly leave you behind and move forward on our own.
Our age is full of knowledge and rich ideas. We believe the future is not far off, when our new symbols will guide our actions and their beauty will be shown to all through a rebirth of art."

PREFACE

I am glad to have the honour of writing a short preface to this pamphlet, because herein Mrs. Montefiore takes the line I myself took in my last book on Socialism: a book dedicated to "Mother."

The hope of the future, I am convinced, lies in woman: woman honoured, woman cultured, woman free. Not until it has been made impossible to degrade, or to starve, or to buy and sell women, under cover of the law, will true morality be possible in England. Not until we have a race of women healthy, fearless, and free; a race of women who are mistresses of their own lives, and their own love, and their own souls, will England become, in the highest sense of the Words, a "great nation."

Votes for women! Yes. I am in favour of votes for all women. But votes are only valuable in politics as guns are valuable in war. If women use their votes against Socialism they will be using their guns against their own emancipation: only through Socialism can woman win to her place by man's side: only through Socialism can she gain honour and happiness and freedom.

The object of this pamphlet is to persuade women to study Socialism; to find out what Socialism means, and where it will take them. That lesson learnt, the votes will follow. And I will say here, as I have said elsewhere, that if we could have a million women—a million women in earnest—on our side, we should feel assured of victory whether those women had

votes or not. For character and enthusiasm are worth more than votes. In this country it is the force of public opinion that tells. And the influence of an informed and enthusiastic womanhood upon public opinion is incalculable.

The common people are beautiful; their heart is sound. And the sweetest and the noblest amongst the common people are the mothers. If we can make those mothers understand what Socialism means to motherhood; and to their children; their great love, and the innate ideality that blooms perennially in the true woman's soul will draw all the best mothers of England into the Socialist ranks; and the victory will be achieved; and never any more will any child be unloved, or ignorant, or hungry in England; and never any more shall English women be drudges, or slaves, or chattels amongst free men; and the race will begin to live; and the day will come when a stronger and nobler people will wonder sadly why in our day and generation we were so cowardly, and so brutal, and so mean.

I hope our women will read this eloquent pamphlet and will ponder it deeply, and that in a little while they will come over to the Socialist side, and bring victory to the women and the men who alone in this nation today love, and revere and honour mother.

ROBERT BLATCHFORD
December, 1907.

SOME WORDS TO

SOCIALIST WOMEN

The one common appeal that is sure to go straight home to the heart and head of every Socialist woman: whether she has only been a short time, or for many years in the movement; whether she has carefully studied its economic basis, or has only glad intuitions of it; whether she is able to work for Socialism, only in her home and among a few near neighbours, or is standing for it publicly before the callous and hostile world—is the one common appeal of Motherhood. Some Socialist women, when they read this opening sentence, may think this is rather an old-fashioned way to begin a pamphlet which we hope to spread among non-Socialists, in order to let them know what we Socialist women are working for, both now and in the future. But when I have explained that I am using the word Motherhood in its Socialist, and not in its individualist, sense -that is to say, that I mean it to include, not only physical; but intellectual, spiritual and social Motherhood; those who are students of Socialist principles will understand at once that the word, used in this wide and social sense, does make the new and true appeal to all women that the evolved Socialist woman desires to make.

Let me extend the thought a little further. Is it not a fact that actual physical motherhood is quite insufficient to rear, train, educate and develop the character of an ideal citizen?

Physical motherhood gives life; but the three other phases step in later on, and each fulfil their function towards the growing child. Nay, is it not true that in these later stages many women, who from one cause or another, have not experienced physical motherhood, are able to share in the joys and sorrows of intellectual, spiritual and social motherhood? There is no necessity to dwell on this point; one has only to remember the thousands of women engaged in teaching and in training the moral and spiritual faculties of the young; of those who are bringing up orphan or deserted children; of those who are working in public administration, and are thus exercising Social Motherhood. Under the present system of capitalism, or of private property, belonging to a privileged few, every woman_ who feels this appeal of motherhood must suffer daily, when she sees the greater number of the children of the race thrust out by material conditions from any share in real home life, from any just share in the food, and the clothing, and the comforts enjoyed by other children, and from any contact with decent social environment. No woman, with the real mother feeling, can be satisfied to see only *her* children enjoying the advantages which all children should enjoy. If the sight of the condition of the majority of the children in the various countries where Capitalism enforces present economic and social conditions, does not warn mothers that something is wrong in the body politic, then it shows how morally deteriorating are conventional religion, conventional ethics, and conventional social conditions. We Socialist women appeal, as mothers, to those who still believe that Christianity has power to alter the heart of man, and cause him to do justice to his fellow-man; and, taking the words and actions of the founder of the religion in which the majority of the

people of this country believe, we ask them: How many of those in authority and power should have mill-stones tied round their necks, and be cast into the sea, for allowing, nay, for forcing the little children of our slums and alleys and villages to live as they do live? Under Socialism, this daily reproach, this daily suffering thrust at present on every evolved, potential mother, will cease; for all children from their birth, have equal advantages and opportunities. Motherhood suffers under the present competitive system when the children of the working classes have to begin to earn their own living before they are physically strong enough to do so, and before their education and training, which should fit them for their lifework, is complete. The loss to the race under the present system, which puts on tens of thousands of growing, ill-nourished children the double strain of wage-earning and of intellectual study, is incalculable. Under Socialism, only adults, that is, grown-up people over twenty-one, would be working for the community; and it is only under such conditions that the best brains, and the best muscles, and the best character among the whole youth of the nation will be developed. Motherhood suffers again at the present time, when the boys and girls, being grown up, come in contact with the vice of the streets and of the public-house, as run at present for profits to the brewers. Here, again, the comparatively few “privileged” young people can be, to some extent, protected and saved from the worst and lowest temptations; but for the masses of the young the only “pleasures” that commercialism offers are those whose unholy profits enrich titled brewers, and aristocratic ground landlords. Collective Motherhood has no power to cleanse and purify the streets, as she would cleanse and purify her home. But, under Socialism, when all places of

amusement will be run for the real benefit and pleasure of the community, and not for profit-mongers, the pure mother spirit will reach out further than the four walls of the material home, and will follow with love and wisdom the steps of her sons and daughters through some of the most difficult years of their young lives.

Motherhood is, under present conditions, again outraged and stultified, when her sons and daughters grown to manhood and womanhood, fail to find work in the country of their birth, and have to face the alternative of slow starvation and deterioration, or of being shipped off by the emigration agent, who finds his profit in the economic despair of his fellow-creatures. Motherhood under Socialism will be relieved from the pang of knowing that the child she caresses, feeds, and cares for, for whom she would, if necessary, lay down her life, may some day be faced with the alternatives of registering at a Distress Committee, of breaking stones in a Workhouse, or of committing a crime against property, in order to be sent to prison and obtain the food and shelter which society denies at the present time to the out-of-work. Again, is not Motherhood under Capitalism mocked, when it is told to produce fighting men, in order that commercial wars of aggression may be undertaken, and her sons may be taught to kill, in the quarrels of kings and emperors, the sons of other mothers? Socialism is nothing if it is not international; and this international spirit of comradeship will kill out the competitive spirit of commercial and imperial rivalry, and help the nations in the future to live together in peace. Finally, is it not the mother, she whose life has been spent in ministering to others, who best understands the care and tending of the old—of those whose day's work being

done, need a tender, helpful hand down the last painful hill? Under Capitalism it is only a few among the old who receive that sheltering, understanding care; the old among the working classes are forced, either to feel themselves burdens on already overburdened sons and daughters, or they starve in garrets and cellars, or are driven by the relieving officer into the dreaded Workhouse. Under Socialism, Collective Motherhood would fix an age when compulsory work for the community should cease, after which the superannuated could, as the privileged superannuated do now, be maintained by the community, either with their families, or in communal life, or in communal life with their contemporaries in age.

This, then, is why I have chosen the guiding thought of Motherhood, as it is, and as it might be, in this exposition of Socialism from the woman's point of view; in order to prove that the better the woman, the more loving and more evolved the mother, the more actively she should be struggling to replace the present chaos of Capitalism by organised Socialism. This Socialism, of which we hear so much nowadays, may be described, not so much as a system, not so much as a dogma (that is, some belief to be taken on faith), but as an interpretation of *facts* from the point of view of the oppressed, but evolving, masses of the population. Now, in order to emphasise and interpret these facts, and to throw light on what Motherhood under Capitalism is compelled to be, I shall begin by reminding you that, taking our whole population of 43 millions, one-third, or 14 millions of that population, at the present time lives below the level of subsistence; that is to say, in plain English that one-third of the people have not enough food for their stomachs, nor

enough clothes to their backs! What sort of motherhood do you think is possible among that one-third of the population of wealthy England? What home life is possible where the woman home-maker never knows from one week-end to another what is the scanty sum she will have at her command to lay out on bread, milk and scraps of meat or fried fish? What home life is possible where the thought, of Monday, with the fateful rap of the man calling for the rent, shakes the nerve of the woman home-maker, and drives her forth pitilessly (it may be in merciless cold and wet) to take her place at daybreak on Monday morning in the waiting procession outside the pawnbroker's, with some treasured bit of the home under her ragged shawl? How can the home lamp of love be kept burning under conditions such as these? How can the tender ministry of helpful sympathy, which is a mother's due in her hour of pain and need, be realised in the distressful, disorganised lives, which present society, as a strong, successful, unsympathetic whole, force on the weak and unsuccessful in the daily struggle for existence?

Let me quote from my impressions of that memorable march of the women of the unemployed in November, 1905, when Mr. Balfour found courage to reply to the broken words of women, starving in the midst of plenty: "You have my sympathy, but what can I do?" And then let me remind you women that a Liberal. Prime Minister now fills the place of Mr. Balfour; but the wives and children of the unemployed and underpaid are still starving in the midst of plenty. "One out of every three or four women," I wrote then, "carried a more or less puny, ill-nourished infant in her arms; and now and then a child would be passed from one to another, so as to give the overstrained mother a rest. Wonderfully patient

and uncomplaining were both mothers and babies, for lack of everything is a stern, relentless task-master, which brings, after a time, men, women, and unconscious children to heel, and eats out the heart of honest rebellion. If you would know what it has cost to get these women to muster in the street, and show forth their dire need before an unsympathetic world, you must first reckon how long they have gone short, and starved in silence; how long they have put up in their front windows well-washed bits of white curtains, when the clothing and furniture had gone piece by piece to the pawnbroker's; how long they had fiercely kept up the exteriors of "respectability," as measured by working-class standards; how much it had cost them to appear before parish authorities, and disclose the cruel emptiness of the squalid rooms they still called 'home,' while they begged for a parish dole to save from starvation themselves and their children. When you have undermined and beaten down fortress after fortress of these reserves, then the woman-soul, the mutilated mother-soul, will perhaps stand revealed for those who have eyes to see, and hearts to understand; and you will recognise in these gaunt, starved, bloated, and at times smitten faces, the souls of heroines, who have performed, and are prepared in their inarticulate, unconscious, but faithful constancy, to perform again and again deeds of self-renunciation, of which most well-to-do women are utterly incapable. Mutilated Motherhood! That is the fate, that is the martyrdom to which England condemns masses of her womanhood. And out of that mutilation, out of that martyrdom she seems to expect that she can breed the citizens of a great and free Empire!"

Now, that description of the submerged motherhood of the East End is just as true of the submerged in our other great towns, and just as true of the wives of our agricultural labourers, wearing out their lives in bringing up an underfed race on the fourteen or fifteen shillings a week, which is the agricultural labourer's share of the food-wealth he produces. Out of the 43 million people of Great Britain, about 5 millions receive half the annual income of the country, while 38 millions receive the other half. You will at once understand, therefore, that those 38 millions must be, more or less, the wage-slaves of the 5 millions; and then, if you think and reason more about it, you will say to yourselves: "Those 38 millions must be very foolish if they do not understand that numbers make strength, and that if they all united together, and knew what they wanted, and worked for what they wanted, they could not fail to get it."

Well, what is it the people of England want; what is it that each of you working-class mothers want in order that the millions of workers may get a fair share of wealth, and comfort, and education? You want, first, the land of England, from which you have been turned away; you want, secondly, the machinery, and workshops and factories for your own, so that you may begin at once to grow food, and make clothes, and build houses for the use of the people, instead of for making profits for the 5 millions, who now receive half the national income. Then you want, further, to get hold of all the railways, and steamers, and canals, so that you may be able to use them as freely as you now do the roads; and transport the food, and the clothes, and the building materials to the parts of the country where they are needed. Then you want everything that is grown and produced to be grown and

produced for the use of all, and not, as at present, *for the profit of a few*. This scheme is the only remedy that will cure unemployment, sweep away the slums, and feed the hungry children! The 5 million rich people know that this is so; and they do all they can to prevent the 14 million under-paid, under-fed workers from learning about it; and they give every winter, what are called by the newspapers in their pay "magnificent voluntary contributions for the relief of distress"; while all the rest of the year they are themselves manufacturing that distress.

Do not be deceived, you women of the people for whom I am writing; do not be deceived about "those magnificent voluntary subscriptions." When one of you, out of your scanty spending-money, gives a penny to someone poorer than yourself; or when some mother among you gives a slice of bread-and-butter to a neighbour's child going starving to school, you are depriving yourselves of much more than does the rich man or woman who sends in a cheque for £10,000 to be distributed on "charity!" *Don't forget, never forget, that the giver of the cheque, and 5 million others, receive half the annual income*!!! Write out these facts in plain figures, and talk them over with your men, and teach them to your children; and when you have thought about them, and talked about them, and taught them to others, when you have been to Socialist meetings, and perhaps asked questions, and received answers that will set you thinking further, you will find that the only remedy for all the troubles under which you working-class mothers suffer, is Socialism; and that the only people, who are trying permanently to help you are the Socialist leaders. *What those leaders are waiting for now is*

the help of the millions of workers, men and women, who get such a miserable share of England's great wealth.

But you will be told by some: "Socialists are wicked people, who don't believe in God, and who want to break up family life." Now Socialism, being, as I have told you already, not a system, not a belief, but an interpretation of facts, based on the oppression of the working classes, it can have nothing to do with the question of your belief or unbelief in a personal God. Just as in the matter of food, one food may suit one person, and disagree with another, so in the matter of beliefs, one form of belief may suit one person, and may seem absurd to another. But Socialism can have nothing to dictate as to the nature of your food, or as to the form of your belief. What Socialism will do is to provide the best quality of food, and the best quality of sound scientific teaching for all, so that there may be no physical deterioration caused by adulterated food, and no intellectual ignorance and error caused by superstition and lack of knowledge. Socialism will teach that ignorance is the only sin; that the time to be happy is now, and the place to be happy is *here*; and it will point out how that happiness, under a re-organised system of society, may be obtained. Do not be afraid, you women, of the word "science"; it only means the gathered and ordered knowledge of the past and of the present; and it is only right that all of us, who have to live in this world, should have, at our disposal, and be carefully taught the best that men know. We Socialists want you women above all things to think for your-.selves, and not believe at once, without inquiring into the matter, when people tell you that established religion has always been the best friend of women. Don't forget that Jehovah, the God of the Jews, is reported by one of the

"inspired" writers of the Bible as having said to some of the Jews with whom he was angry: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and will take thy wives, before thy eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour." What sort of opinion do you think that God had of women, when he simply used them to punish men, with whom he was angry? Never seeming to think for a moment of the horrible suffering and degradation to which he was subjecting those Jewish wives.

We want you also to use your reason, and to think out for yourselves this question of the "breaking up of family life," the blame for which is being fastened on the Socialists. It is quite true that family life is not now exactly what it was when I, and perhaps some of you who are reading this, were young. These changes have not only taken place in the families of the workers, but in the families of the upper and middle classes Many things are now made in factories, and many processes are carried on by steam or electricity, outside the home, which used to be carried on in the home by hand. The facilities now for having meals away from home, and in public and cheap restaurants, are enormous, and are increasing every day. Education is compulsory for all children; and, before long, many of the children will have, at least, one meal at the school which they attend; whilst, as we know, the children of the upper and middle classes go to boarding schools, and have all their meals away from home. All these causes, together with the fact that the girls, who used to help their mothers in the home work, and received no pay, now work outside in factories, shops, and restaurants, and get paid for their labour—all these facts, I say, take people out of their homes, and tend to make the home-tie

apparently less close than it used to he. But it does not make home love and affection less, because those affections go deep down into human nature, and no outside economic causes change or alter them. Neither have Socialists anything to do with this gradual and evolutional change in the conditions of family life. The change is produced by economic causes—those very same causes which are forcing to the front the teachings of Socialism. Those of you who have read history will know that society was not always organised as it is organised now, neither were conventional sex relations what they are now. In the times of the Greeks and Romans, the workers were chattel-slaves, and the property of their masters; later on, when it was no longer profitable to keep slaves, this same class of workers were called serfs, who were attached to the soil, which they had to cultivate for their masters; but they could not be bought and sold, as were the chattel-slaves. Then, with industrialism came wage-slavery, when men and women are "free" to work when work is to be had from the capitalist employer, and are "free" to starve when no work is to be obtained. But through all these economic changes the position of the working woman has always been worse than the position of the working man, because she has had to suffer an added slavery: the slavery of sex. *Her sex has never been her own, to deal with as she herself desires*. As a chattel-slave, her master, besides making her work for his profit, used her body as his property. As a serf, even the married woman serf could not escape the degradation of having to submit herself to the "rights" claimed by the feudal lord; and under industrialism, the woman who is forced by economic necessity to work in a factory, too often finds that the tradition of this sex oppression and sex servitude survives in the power exercised

by the foreman. Women of all classes have been legislated for, not as individuals, not as responsible human beings, but as the property of some man. If you doubt this, think of the wording of the marriage service, where the woman has to be given by one man to the other man, proving that she never, in the eyes of the Law or of the Church, belongs to herself. Then, again, in cases of divorce, if the co-respondent (or the man with whom the wife has formed a fresh tie) has property, he is called upon by the law to pay damages, for having stolen, or damaged the husband's property; proving once again that this old idea of the woman being the sex-property of some man has not yet died out. As the ideas of Socialism spread, so private property in everything (wives included) will cease to exist, and women of all classes will possess themselves. If you will think out this question for yourselves, you will call to mind the various reasons beside love and inclination, for which women now, too often, enter into marriage; and you will then be able to realise how differently the woman of the future, who will be economically free, will approach the subject of a life-union with a man who is also economically free. Many women marry now because they need a home, and they think that if they marry, the man will make them that home, and they will be happier and have easier lives than when working for themselves, or depending on relations. But, under Capitalism, the woman soon finds that it is very difficult for a man to earn enough for himself, and wife and children; and she herself is too often forced to accept any unorganised, ill-paid work that may offer, in order to keep the wolf from the door. Under Socialism, all child-bearing women, who are fulfilling one of the most important functions in the community, in providing it with healthy future citizens, will be maintained by the community, just as

everyone else who works for the community will be maintained. Please note that I write, “healthy children,” because the Socialist Commonwealth will require that this question of Motherhood shall, like every other question, be studied and treated scientifically; and men and women will be required to make scientific motherhood and fatherhood a special study. In the sex-unions of the future the fact of paramount importance to the community will be the children that are the result of such unions; because the community, being bound to support the children, has a right to demand that they shall be well and healthily born. With unions that do not result in child-bearing, the community will have no cause for interference (beyond registering when they commence and cease), because that will be part of the private life of the people concerned; and with the private life of grown-up people the Commonwealth, or Administration, will have nothing to do. Remember, my women friends and comrades, that the race itself is growing up, is becoming conscious of its destiny; and an important part of that consciousness must be expressed in its Motherhood and Fatherhood. Once we have gained Adult Suffrage (which is very near in this country, if the people, are prepared to show they mean to have it), all legislation must be made to tend less and less towards governing, or interfering with the private life of individuals, and more and more towards the *administration of the affairs of the people as a whole*. We, as an evolved conscious race, will direct our own lives; and together we will co-operatively and democratically manage our own affairs. I have already pointed out that what are called “economic questions” (that is, questions that have to do with wage-earning., the supply of labour, and the opportunities people have of working for wages) always affect

the conventional, and often the legalised morals of the day; and to illustrate this point I want you working women to note how differently a domestic servant, who bears an illegitimate child, is treated nowadays by her mistress, to what she used to be treated twenty or thirty years ago. In those days the domestic servant unmarried mother was said to "have lost her character"; it was almost impossible for her of get another place, and her mistress and society usually combined to place the girl in a penitentiary, where she worked for years at the wash-tub without wages. Nowadays, good servants, especially good cooks, are much scarcer than they were twenty or thirty years ago; *and they are therefore of more economic value*; if, therefore, a modern mistress discovers that an "excellent servant" is likely to become a mother, she generally sends the girl away till the child is born, and helps her afterwards to place the child under proper care; and the mistress very often takes the servant back into her service. As you see, the economic conditions have modified the middle-class judgment of the offence against conventional morals.

You will begin, perhaps, to see now that it is all these economic changes, these new economic forces, that are almost imperceptibly changing our opinions, our laws, and the conditions of our daily lives. These changes, these forces, are quite outside ourselves; we can only interpret them, and help others to understand with us what is causing these changes. Some women at the present time are interpreting things wrongly; they feel and resent much of the burdensome economic inheritance of the past; and, forgetting that it presses almost as heavily on unprivileged men as it does on unprivileged women, they try to stir up a sex-war instead of

preaching a class-war. That this false interpretation of facts is recoiling on themselves is shown by the fact that, at the present time, wherever these anti-man leaders are holding meetings they fail to get a hearing, because they are making the fundamental mistake of stirring up an hysterical form of feminism, instead of setting before the people an understanding and reforming scheme of humanism. The woman of the people has been the first to see through the shallowness of their propaganda, and every day the working-class women are flocking to the banner of Adult Suffrage, or Votes for All Women and All Men.

To give you a concrete case of how motherhood among the working classes is treated now (although capitalist newspapers arc fond of writing about “sacred motherhood” and “the beauty of home”) and how it would be treated under Socialism, I will tell you about a “home” in, the East End of London, where lives a working woman friend of mine; and then you will be able to judge for yourselves whether it is the teaching of Socialism or the forces of Capitalism which are destroying motherhood and home. This working woman friend is bringing up eight beautiful children in a mean brick box (called a “house”), in a mean street in the crowded East End of London, where no rich woman who keeps pet dogs would allow those “pets” to live for one day. For this old, mean, rotten, dilapidated shelter they are forced to call “home,” the parents pay a third of their weekly earnings, and have to take in a lodger in order to help them out with the rent. The children, immediately they are of an age when the law “allows” them to become wage-earners, have to sell newspapers, work in laundries till nine o’clock at night, or do some of the other underpaid and despised work of this busy

London. The mother has fulfilled every duty of motherhood since the children were born; and, in spite of their miserable surroundings, they are fair and beautiful. But what help does that woman get in her daily struggle, in her daily deadening round of domestic work in a "home" which no earthly power could ever make clean or home-like? Does the community take into consideration the fact that she is bringing up for the future eight healthy, strong citizens? No; the community, under the present system, never helps her in her struggle, never encourages her in the fulfilment of her duties. If she were a bad mother, if she let her children die by feeding them out of dirty bottles, instead of giving them the breast; if she spent her husband's scanty wage at the public-house, instead of making it go as far as she can among the ten hungry mouths, she would be punished by the community; but of help, praise, encouragement, a fair share of the *necessities*, even, of life—there is nothing of that for the working-class mother of to-day! And under Socialism, what would be the position of my friend? Her eight children would have the same conditions, the same advantages in life as all the other children of the nation. The clothing produced would be for the benefit of all; and all the pretty and useful things that are displayed in the shop windows now for the joy and comfort of a few privileged mothers and babies would then be procurable from the communal stores for the benefit of *all* mothers and babies. The schools would be for all the children of the nation, and none would be taken away from school to work for their living before they were strong enough and healthy enough to stand the burden of work. As all the old, horrible slums, and alleys, and dark, noisome courts would have disappeared, my friend and her children would be living in a house, where the little ones could learn from their baby

days what the comfort and beauty of home-life mean. The present system of public restaurants will then be organised and improved, and those whose work or taste lead them to have their meals away from home, will know that the food provided outside by communal care is as free from adulteration as scientifically-taught, Social Motherhood can make it. The walls of the communal restaurants will be hung with the best pictures that Art, under the fostering care of Socialism, can produce; and pleasant, soft music will be played while meals are going on, just as it is played now in the expensive restaurants of the West End, where the privileged rich congregate. Can you, who read this, realise how different would be the life of the East End mother of whom I have written? Do you not believe that this is an ideal worth working for, worth suffering for? And does not every one of you working women, who believes, as I do, that her children should have the same chance as other children, desire to work and to struggle for the realisation of this ideal? Some of our first practical aims must be to get votes for all women and all men, and to see that no children go hungry to school. And when you working-class mothers come out into the streets, and demonstrate for these great reforms, and *show the Government that you mean to have them*, then it will not be long before you get them.

Do not think, my women friends, these are fanciful dreams of the future that I have set before you; but remember that most of the intelligent men and women of the day are writing for, and speaking for, Socialism in all countries; and that each country is helping the other in the struggle to “give the world to the workers.”

In conclusion I am going to quote for you the words of a thinker, who has helped me much by his thought during the last twenty years. I rejoice always when I remember that he is one of the professors at the London University and is there influencing day by day the minds of the young men and young women, who may in their day see the realisation of our Socialist ideals:

"To those who see in these things an ideal of idle dreamers and not a possibility of the future, I can only reply: Measure well the forces which are at work in our age, mark the strength of the men and women who are dissatisfied with the present, weigh carefully the enthusiasm of the teachers of our new morality, socialistic and sexual, then you will not class them as dreamers only. To those who would know their duty at the present, I can but say: The first steps towards our ideal are the spread of Socialism as a morality, and the complete emancipation of our sisters. To those who, like the aged poet, halt and are faint at heart, seeing in the greatness of our time only pettiness and lust, we must bid a sorrowful but resolute farewell—'Father, thou knowest not our needs. Thy task is done; remain and rest, we must onward. Farewell.' We are full of new emotions, new passions, new thoughts; our age is not one of pettiness and lust, but replete with clearer and nobler ideas than the past, ideas that its sons will generate and its daughters bring to birth. Dangers and difficulties there arc: misery, pain and wrong-doing over and enough. But we of to-day see beyond them; they do not cause us to despair, but summon us to action. You of the past valued Christianity: aye, and we value free thought; you of the past valued faith: aye, and we value knowledge; you have sought wealth eagerly: we value more the duty and right to labour;

you talked of the sanctity of marriage: we find therein love sold in the market, and we strive for a remedy in the freedom of sex. Your symbols are those of the past, symbols to which civilisation owes much, great landmarks in past history, pointing the direction of man's progress: even suggesting the future—our ideal. But as symbols for our action to-day, they are idle; they denote in the present serfdom of thought, and serfdom of labour, and serfdom of sex. We have other ideals more true to the coming ages—freedom of thought, and freedom of labour, and freedom of sex; ideals based on a deeper knowledge of human nature and its history than you, our fathers, could possess. Term them impious, irrational, impure, if you will: 'tis because you have understood neither the time, nor us. We must leave you sorrowfully behind and go forward alone. The age is strong in knowledge, rich in ideas; we hold the future not so distant when our symbols shall be the guides of conduct, and their beauty brought home to humanity by their realisation in a renascent art."